

USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

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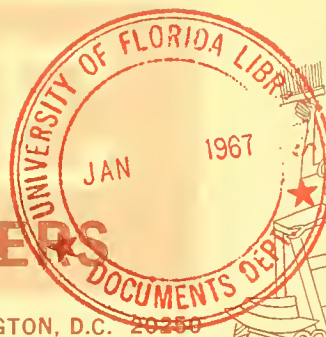
CONSUMER OUTLOOK FOR 1967

The Food Situation. Economists at the U.S. Department of Agriculture say the cost of food, like the cost of most other things, will continue to edge upward in 1967. The increase will not, however, match the price increases of 1966.

Reduced beef supplies will more than likely mean higher beef prices, particularly after midyear. Dairy prices probably will increase further, and consumers can expect another rise in the price of cereal and bakery products. Fats and oils, too, may cost more; potato prices should remain about the same. On the bright side for consumers, the forecast is for generous supplies of pork, poultry and eggs--meaning lower prices for these items. Citrus fruits, too, should be less expensive in 1967.

Home Furnishings. High incomes which are expected to go higher...unemployment kept low by military calls...and more new families formed by post-World War II babies now of marriage age... These three factors will keep the demand for home furnishings and equipment high through 1967. Increased labor charges and higher prices for raw materials--copper, aluminum, steel and wood--will further add to the price of home furnishings. Shoppers can expect to see higher price tags on furniture (about 4 percent more) and major appliances (3 percent). Television consoles will also cost more in '67. Only soft goods home furnishings (draperies, slipcovers and rugs) so far show no indication of price rises--but they, too, may be affected by the rise in labor costs, USDA economists say.

Clothing. In the market for a man's suit? Buy it now. Prices of some suits are expected to increase next spring by as much as \$5. By next fall increases may be fairly widespread--with a maximum increase of 5 percent. The price of shoes, too, is expected to advance next spring--another 3 to 5 percent. This increase probably won't be in all lines but on a selective basis--such as children's lines and top quality adult dress shoes. The boost in both shoe and clothing costs is due largely to increases in labor and other production costs.



FAMILY LIVING

It's Papa Who Pays. Having a baby? You'll end up paying as much for him as your house. To raise a farm child from birth to age 18 costs anywhere from \$13,000 to \$27,000, reports Lucile F. Mork, family economist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Which figure applies to your family depends upon how fancy you feed and clothe the child, where you live (North or South), and how many brothers and sisters he may have. Using 1961 cost figures--the result of the latest consumer expenditure survey--USDA statisticians included everything from medical care to transportation. The lowest figure was for a low-income farm child in the South; the high of \$27,000 was for a child raised on a prosperous farm in either North or South.

AID FOR THE NEEDY

Extended Credit. Hard-pressed rural people who want to improve their homes or start small businesses are now eligible for a revolving credit plan that gives them a chance to borrow as they repay. This new weapon in the war on poverty has been made possible under an amendment to the Economic Opportunity Act. Loans are made by the Department of Agriculture to persons living in rural areas who cannot get capital from conventional credit sources. Up to now, there's been a loan limit of \$2,500. Under the new provision, a needy person can get credit up to \$3,500. And--he can borrow again before the loan is paid back, so long as he keeps up his payments and never lets his total indebtedness exceed \$3,500.

To Stamp Out Poor Diets. With a pat on the back from President Johnson, USDA's Food Stamp Program went into its sixth year of operation with 324 areas in 40 States and the District of Columbia participating. Some 1.2 million needy people received food coupons worth \$174 million in fiscal 1966. Of this, \$65 million was donated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to help Food Stamp families buy more and better food. Under the Program, needy families put up the amount of money they would normally spend for food to buy coupons worth more than they pay. They then spend the coupons, like money, at local retail food stores. Studies show that people using food stamp coupons buy more meat, fruits and vegetables, and dairy products--foods needed for growth and health--than they did without the stamps.

Bountiful Market Basket. Needy families, charitable institutions and schools from coast to coast received about 1.5 billion pounds of food last year from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In addition, the Department helped feed victims of Hurricane Betsy in the Gulf Coast States and the typhoon last January in American Samoa. The food was acquired by USDA through its price-support activities. It was distributed in cooperation with state and local governments and, in the case of disasters, private relief agencies.

Needed: Greater Buying Skill. According to the National Commission on Food Marketing, the poor seem to be the least-skilled buyers and among the most readily influenced by promotion. And here's where the government can help, G. E. Brandow, professor of agricultural economics at Pennsylvania State University, told the 44th Annual Agricultural Outlook Conference. As an aid not only to the poor, but to all consumers, Professor Brandow urged the government to provide more adequate food shopping information--grades, standards of identity, reasonable standards for labels and packages. The government also must help educate consumers to be better-informed food buyers, Professor Brandow said.

HOLIDAY HINTS

Turkey Tip. Here's a helpful hint that will put the homemaker in the living room a little sooner on Christmas day. U.S. Department of Agriculture food specialists suggest cooking the stuffing separately, then roasting it the last hour that the turkey cooks. For a moist stuffing, baste occasionally with pan drippings from the roasting turkey. A turkey roasted without stuffing tastes just as good as a stuffed turkey, USDA research shows.

Tree Test. Bounce it, whack it, sniff it. If the Christmas tree you select can pass these tests--buy it. Choose a tree for its shape and size. But check before you buy to be sure it's fresh, say USDA tree specialists. A quick bounce on the frozen ground can give you the answer. The needles will fly if it's dry. Or take a whack at the branches and see how well the needles hold. Then smell the tree. A newly-cut tree will have that fresh-from-the-forest smell.

For More Fragrance. For a healthy, fire-resistant Christmas tree, keep your tree well-watered, urges the U.S. Department of Agriculture. A 6-foot tree may take up as much as a quart of water a day when first brought indoors. This water is needed to replace the moisture given off by the needles in the warm atmosphere of your home. And did you know? The more moisture the needles give off, the more fragrant your tree.

What's Plentiful? There's lots of good eating ahead for the family who follows the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Plentiful Foods List for December. Food shops will be full of broiler-fryers, canned salmon, grapes, raisins, pork and winter pears. And here's what you can look forward to in January--oranges (they're the featured item on the list), more pears and broiler-fryers, grapefruit, dry beans and green split peas.

PROGRAM AID

Young People's Projects. Anyone who works with youth groups will be interested in this recently revised booklet on "Forestry Activities" put out by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Designed as a guide for youth group leaders, the 32-page booklet is filled with learn-and-do projects. Activities include making a model watershed, keeping Christmas trees fresh and safe, making and distributing litterbags, working a conservation crossword puzzle. Ideal for Scouts, Campfire Girls, 4-H, church and other groups from 8 to 18. Copies of this publication are free to group leaders. Send a postcard to the Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Ask for PA-457.

FASHION FACTS

Shoe Trends. Although there are now more than 25 substitutes for leather on the market, leather is still the most popular item for shoe uppers. The trend in women's shoes is toward a more masculine look. The "cossack" boot will continue to be popular this winter. Spring lines will feature more strap-type shoes and a more squared-off toe.

Stocking Up. How many pairs of hose does your wife or daughter wear each year? According to home economists at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the average female (15 years and older) purchases 19 pairs of full-length seamless nylons a year.



THE FOOD WE EAT

Cholesterol and the College Girl. High-starch diet...high-sugar diet... It didn't seem to make much difference in the cholesterol levels of a group of University of Maryland women who recently participated in USDA diet tests. Earlier tests on men had indicated high-sugar diets go along with higher blood cholesterol levels.

We're Eating More. Rising food costs haven't kept Americans from eating any less food--report economists at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Per capita food consumption so far in 1966 is up 1 percent over last year. The prediction is for another small rise in consumption in 1967. Which foods saw the biggest gains? Poultry, beef, vegetable oils and potatoes.

Big Break. A broken egg in a bag of groceries can be a big bother to the food shopper. But think what a disaster 1.8 billion broken eggs a year must be to egg producers, packers and marketing men. In its search to find eggs with tougher shells, USDA has developed a device that measures shell thickness--without breaking the egg. Next comes the development of those breeds that lay rugged eggs.

THE HUNGRY WORLD

Another Helping. "The world food problem cannot be solved by increasing food aid. The only permanent solution is by increasing agricultural productivity within the developing Nations themselves." With these words, Dorothy Jacobson, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for International Affairs, emphasized the new self-help feature of the Food for Freedom programs--to help hungry Nations feed themselves. We will continue to give them food aid, she said. We will enrich and fortify commodities to combat malnutrition. And we will urge other Nations to also come to the aid of these countries. But the main objective will be to assist developing countries of the free world to accelerate their own food production. The aim: Victory over hunger in our generation.

The Widening Gap. The world food situation is getting worse instead of better, say USDA food-population experts. Two forces are at work reducing the chances of low-income countries to feed their people. One is the exploding population, especially in the hungry countries. The other is the rapid rise in per capita incomes in the more advanced countries. For example, in a developing Nation, such as India, each person uses about 400 pounds of grain a year. But as people with growing incomes graduate to more high-protein diets of meat and eggs, such as in the U.S., they consume 1,600 pounds of grain a year (counting the grain fed to the animals that produce the food in their diet). These two forces make for a widening gap in the diets between people of the "have" and "have-not" Nations.

Because of the vital information contained in this report (presented at a recent conference on Alternatives for Balancing Future World Food Production and Needs), we are offering copies free for local club programs. With the speech come 5 colored chart slides pointing up the pertinent data. Both are available from the Editor of Service; the slides on a loan basis.

SERVICE is a monthly newsletter of consumer interest. It is designed for those who report to the individual consumer rather than for mass distribution. For information about items in this issue, write: Jeanne S. Park, Editor, SERVICE, Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. 20250.